Hi Ned, Tim

Please find under here Ch. 9 modified by me. It is basically good. I propose you leave it as is. Do not even erase ***my*** brackets. They will help me later to fine-tune it. My thought is that when me move later on, we might find that this whole chapter can be squeezed into some 1000 words preceeding the Entebbe story. Leave it this way by now.
Best
EB

~~CHAPTER ONE~~

Chapter Nine (2) modified by EB. March 10, 2016.

Chapter Nine

I doubt any victory has ever felt so (?) hollow.

It *was* a victory, and not just because when the fighting stopped, we were within 60 miles of Cairo, and a mere 25 miles from Damascus. Also, because it had been anything but inevitable. We were attacked by two huge armies: one-and-a-half *million* soldiers. Thousands of tanks. Hundreds of fighter jets. Forces that dwarfed what we were able to call upon. Yet within a few weeks, they were defeated. Other, far larger states had endured months, even years, of hell before prevailing: the Soviet Union, for instance, with its huge strategic depth, or

France, rescued by its American-led allies, in World War Two.

But it didn't feel that way at the time. Pride was outweighed by simple relief: that the war was over, that the country had (?)survived. Even that was nothing compared with the sense of sadness at the friends we'd lost, and the resentment, the sense of betrayal, directed toward the generals who had failed to prepare the army for war. This was particularly true for those of us who had fought in the south, where the reserves had arrived later, the pre-war errors were more glaring, and where our counterattack had been so ill organized. The first public sign of this bitterness came in what began as a one-man protest, outside Golda Meir's residence in Jerusalem. The protestor was a reserve captain named Motti Ashkenazi. When the war broke out, he'd been stationed in the northernmost of the Bar-Lev line fortifications – the only one that was not immediately overrun. Their (?)defenders were among the first Israelis to die.

Within the army, dozens of post-war meetings were held – at company level, battalion, brigade and finally division level – to talk about what had gone wrong. I participated in as many as I could. Like many of my

friends, I felt an urge to talk through what had happened, and hear the experiences of others. These *tahkirim* – debriefings – seemed a healthy process at first. But I was not the only young officer to notice that the higher up the organizational chain it went, the more unedifying, and often self-serving, it became. After we'd heard one too many senior officers explain how they'd had perfect command of the situation, a well-honed plan, expertly executed, a new version of army slang began to spread. In Hebrew, there is a phrase – *sipurei kravot* – which means "battle stories." It was amended to *shipurei kravot*. Battle *improvements*.

Some of the reasons things had gone wrong were not yet clear: above all, why we hadn't known about the impending Syrian and Egyptian attacks. But we did know some things, starting with the fact that Arik had been absolutely right about the folly of the Bar-Lev fortifications. We knew that Moshe Dayan's preference for a defensive line 20 miles back from the canal would have saved lives, and almost certainly made our initial containment and counter-attack easier. But Dayan had also famously said, a few years (?)before the war, that he would "rather have Sharm al-Sheikh without peace, than peace without Sharm al-Sheikh." In other words, even if

we could get a peace treaty with Egypt, it would not be worth giving up the Sinai. It had sounded reasonable enough at the time. But what about the part of the equation he had *left out*? Whether keeping Sharm was worth the blood of hundreds and hundreds of young Israelis.

That issue, as it happened, would preoccupy me even more in a few years' time – when I *learned* more of what had gone on before the war. But already, there was a growing sense in the country of the scale of errors and misjudgments made before the war. The shorthand being used in the press was *meikhdal*. The huge blunder.

And the careers of dozens of senior officers were about to altered dramatically – in some cases, ended – as a result of it.

* * *

Most of the soldiers I'd led in the war soon returned to their day-to-day lives. But I was assigned to convert my makeshift force into a regular battalion: Battalion 100 to 532. It would remain part of the same brigade as in the war, the main dedicated armored training force.

This new role was a clear step up the armored corps ladder. I'd been a mere company commander in the War of

Attrition, Battalion commander in 73’ but now was in charge of a regular battalion. Its specific responsibility was a challenge I also especially welcomed, fresh from my experience of our armored limitations and setbacks in the war. Our job was to train tank and APC commanders.

But there were also frustrations, mainly a fundamental difference between me and my immediate superiors over how best to apply the lessons from the war. My brigade commander was Yossi Peled. His tank brigade had played a key role in confronting the Syrians on the Golan. The division commander was the newly promoted Amnon Reshef, whose Sinai brigade had, along with Dan Shomoron’s, mounted the main initial defense against the Egyptians. Both Amnon and Yossi had fought, and led, heroically. They understood that serious mistakes had been made in the war and that changes were obviously necessary. But their immediate instinct was to restore existing structure and discipline, and to apply all our pre-war rules and routine even more strictly. I can only assume they feared that, otherwise, the long-term damage to confidence and morale would be greater. To me, however, it smacked of the (?)old saying: when you don’t know what to do, you do what you know. My instinct,

more nearly a passion after what I'd experienced on the battlefield only weeks earlier, was to learn, and *apply*, the lessons from the war.

My position was made more delicate by the fact that I was, on two levels, an outsider in my new role. I had been given a regular battalion command more quickly than would usually have been the case. If not for the war, I'd still be in California. If not for having formed, led, and fought with my improvised force of reservists, I would not have got a battalion immediately after the war. I was also an outsider in another sense. It is true that even before returning to Sayeret Matkal after university, I had started preparing, and training, for armored command. But to those tank commanders who had never served anywhere else but the armored corps, I would always remain a sayeret man. I'm sure that was an additional reason Dan Shomron and I became so close. He, too, was in an outsider, having moved to armor from the parachutists and Battalion 890.

I tried to behave myself as best I could during the months I commanded the training battalion. I made sure (with limited success) our facilities were spotless, that meetings began and ended on time, that uniforms were clean and boots shined. I stressed the importance of

teaching the basics, the old “standard operating procedures”, even though, as I’d anticipated, they’d proved pretty useless in battles (like the Chinese Farm). But in addition, I ran a whole series of exercises emphasizing the need for maneuverability, flexibility and surprise in confronting the kind of real-world enemies we’d just fought in the Sinai.

I also kept in close touch with Dan. Both of us became keen on an idea not only to defend our tanks against Egyptian Saggers, but to (?)outflank and effectively neutralize them. Israel had recently taken delivery of an American anti-tank missile called the TOW. Like the Saggers, they were portable and (?)wire-guided. But their guidance system was more sophisticated, with the help of an optical sensor on the firing sight. Their range was about two-and-a-half miles, a mile greater than the Saggers. Small TOW units were being added to our infantry brigades. But Dan and I began championing the creation of a dedicated TOW brigade, at first mounted on Jeeps but ideally on –dedicated vehicles that could be moved by helicopter. At any opportunity, to any willing ear, we began making the case for what the Americans would later call a “rapid deployment force”.

Another major frustration of my battalion command was that it delayed my reunion with Nava and Mikhal. The separation was hard, though no doubt harder on my wife and daughter. But at least I knew they were settled, in comfortable surroundings, in Palo Alto. Even in the few weeks we had spent there together, we had loved our married students' accommodation: one of eight cabin-like structures in a leafy development/student village called Escondido, complete with a kids' play area. As I remarked to Nava when we got our first sight of it, it was a bit like a kibbutz, only American-style,(?) upmarket. We had even found time to buy ourselves a car, a used Ford station wagon.

In their absence, I did now find a new apartment for the three of us, and the expanded family we hoped for, a bit further out from the center of Tel Aviv. It was in a new neighborhood in the northeast suburb of Ramat Hasharon. The area was called Neve Rasko, settled disproportionately by families from the armed forces,(?) the Mossad and the Shin Bet, our equivalent of the FBI. Most of the new homes were low-rise cottages or townhouses. But there were several taller apartment blocks. I managed to get a flat for us on the second floor of one of them. With the money from selling the

apartment in Ramat Aviv, it was, if only barely, affordable. So (?)Nava and I agreed that, at the first opportunity, I'd fly out to California, and we'd fly back together.

It was just before the turn of the year when I went for the final few weeks of my truncated (?)time in Stanford. I still hoped to return at some stage for my MA program. But with the ructions going on in the upper reaches of the army after the war, now, obviously, was not the time to ask. So Nava and I sold the Ford. We arranged to buy a refrigerator and a washing machine for the new flat – better models, and cheaper, than those available in Israel. Finally as a family again, we boarded the plane back home.

But that spring would turn out to be my final few months as commander of Battalion 532. On the evening of the First of April, the Agranat Commission of Inquiry – chaired by the Chief Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, Shimon Agranat – published its initial findings. It was merely an "interim" report. But it was explosive. Its recommendations, even more so. The commission was scathing in its assessment of our intelligence failings, which it said had begun with a complacent, core assumption that the Egyptians would never start a war

until their air force had the capability of striking Tel Aviv and deep into Israel. The main blame was placed on Eli Zeira.

The commissioners took aim at two other senior commanders. Gorodish was the first. It was serious enough, they said, that in the week before the war, he'd accepted Eli's assurances that Egyptian troop movements were "only an exercise." But on the day the war broke out, he had failed properly to deploy his forces towards the canal. When he did finally move a division forward, he'd done so too late, in effect sending (?)it into an Egyptian ambush.

And they held Dado, as chief-of-staff, ultimately responsible: both for the intelligence failings, and for not having ordered at least a partial call-up of reserves in the days preceding the war. The commission said it had reached its conclusions about Dado "with regret" and paid tribute to his past record of "dedication and distinction". But its recommendations were clear: Eli, along with several other top intelligence officers, had to go. So did Gorodish. And Dado, (resigned. only till oct. 8)too.

On a personal level, I felt sympathy for Eli and Dado. I knew, and respected, both of them. In Eli's case,

I did recognize that the very fact of our being caught unaware by the war made his position untenable. In fact, as I learned more details about what had happened, from other friends in intelligence, I realized that the commission had, if anything, understated the seriousness of his errors. Even when the full inquiry report was made public two decades later, some of they details were lost on people outside of military intelligence. It referred to Eli's failure regarding "special sources" of intelligence. In fact, these were the T-junctions(?) and other intercepts we had planted in Egypt and Syria. In the days leading up the surprise attack, it turned out he had resisted multiple requests from other intelligence officers to activate them. Worse, given the sense of comfort they gave to the few at the top of the military establishment who knew about their existence, he led them to believe he had done so.

Partly because Dado was one of the people misled, his fall struck me as crueler. I witnessed the effects from much closer as well. We had become family. Nava's younger brother had recently married ~~one of~~ Dado's daughter~~s~~. So I saw a fair amount of him in the months after his dismissal. He was always insistent that, given the misleading information at his disposal, he'd done all he

reasonably could in the days before the war. Wronged though he felt by the inquiry, he did try to move on. He accepted a job with the main Israeli shipping company, Zim. But he had devoted his entire adult life to the defense of his country. Arriving in Palestine as a teenager, he had fought with the Palmach in 1948. (North Command, Syria in 67')He became one of Israel's most respected armored commanders, rising up the ranks to chief-of-staff. Whenever I saw him after Agranat, he smiled, or tried to. But he was not the same person. He got more and more interested in physical exercise, especially tennis and swimming. Psychologists might have called it displacement activity. I remember wondering out loud to Nava whether it was a kind of self-punishment. Either way, it may well have killed him. Less than three years after the war, he died, aged 50, of a heart attack.

His was not the only death amid the fallout from the war. Yori Cohen, one of Avraham's team leaders when I joined Sayeret Matkal and with whom I'd planned (?)our early operations, had long since left the army when the war broke out. But he returned as a reservist. He led a Sayeret sub-~~small~~ unit of APCs on the Golan. When a Syrian shell hit one the vehicles, it killed two (?) of his men – both of whom had served in the sayeret. No one suggested

then, or later, that this was in any way Yori's fault. But he felt he had failed to meet his own standards as a commander. In the months after the war, he sunk into an ever deeper depression. Early in 1974, he took his own life.

Others, at least initially, paid only with their careers. Uzi Yairi, like Yori, had been in overall command when an operation went terribly wrong: in his case, Yitzihak Mordechai's, at the Chinese Farm. As with Yori, no one could reasonably hold him responsible. I have no doubt that if Uzi had known what happened to the series of armored battalions who had already tried to take the Farm, he would never have allowed Battalion 890 to be sent in without armor and artillery support. Still he, too, blamed himself. He was so obviously affected that, after the war, a desk job was found for him in military intelligence in Tel Aviv.

Almost every level of command was thrown into flux after the war, especially once the Agranat report in effect fired not only the head of military intelligence, but the head of the entire army, the chief-of-staff. The political landscape was shaken, too. Within days of the Agranat recommendations, the tide of popular protest

against Golda's government became impossible to ignore. Golda, and Dayan along with her, soon resigned.

The premium was suddenly on finding replacements who were sufficiently experienced, senior and credible on the one hand, but who had also managed to escape responsibility for the errors of the war. As Labor Party leader and the new Prime Minister, the choice fell on Yitzhak Rabin. He had strong military credentials, of course, as a former chief-of-staff. He also had been out of Israel for several years, as ambassador to Washington, having entered Golda's government only weeks earlier, in the relatively minor role of Minister of Labor.

Much the same happened at the top of the army. Before my departure for Stanford, I was invited for farewell meetings with two of the country's most prominent generals: Talik, who was by now deputy chief-of-staff, and Eli Zeira. I was just a 31 years old Lt. Col. To my surprise,Both let drop the possibility that they might be next in line, after Dado, to become chief of staff. Both told me they believed that Dayan, the key voice in telling Golda whom to appoint, was on their side. Motta Gur told me much the same when I stopped by the embassy in Washington on my way out to California. I didn't have any possible influence on this, whatsoever. At the time

it seemed to me they want to see my response to the possibility. Or probably to promote it by spreading it. Which I never did.

Now Motta, by virtue of the fact that he hadn't even been in the country during the war, was the obvious/easier choice. Within days of the Agranat report, he became Israel's 10th chief of staff.

And his appointment, along with a raft of other command changes soon underway, led to yet another, dramatic (?), change in my own place in the army as well.

* * *

Not everyone emerged from the war with his reputation diminished. We would never have won otherwise. The lion's share of the credit went, rightly, to the rank and file of our citizen army. But in the officers' corps, too, there were examples of bravery, quick thinking, initiative and leadership. That was why Yossi Peled and Amnon Reshef had been promoted. And there was a carousel of other changes, some of which would also directly affect me. Bren was moved to take over Gorodish's role as head of the southern command. Another Peled – Moussa Peled, no relation to Yossi – became overall head of the

armored corps, on the strength of his division's part in driving back the Syrians in the north [One of the three most important GHQ decisions during the whole war.EB]. There were also post-war promotions for two of the officers to whom I was particularly close. One was Kuti Adam. I'd known him from my first years in the sayeret. One of his nephews, a Battalion 890 veteran and friend of Avraham Arnan, was brought in to help forge paratroop-style toughness and initiative in the unit. Kuti himself went on to command the Golani Brigade, and also to become Motta's deputy in the northern command. So I got to know him personally during sayeret operations across the northern border. Now, he had been brought south, to take over Bren's division in the Sinai.

Dan Shomron was promoted as well. He became *katzhar*: overall head of infantry and paratroop forces. One immediate effect was that his former job now came open: commanding Brigade 401, which he had helped forge into a model of mobility and battlefield adaptability. Dan quickly, quietly, let me know he wanted me to fill his shoes. And Kuti was now head of the division of which 401 was a part. So in theory at least, I seemed in line for what, to me, was the single most attractive brigade position in the entire armored corps. Moreover, if I did

get the post, I'd be working under(Not True.EB. Under Kuti not DanEB.] a *katzhar* with identical views to mine about the need, and the way, to modernize and improve the country's defenses.

In theory. While I hoped for the best, I knew there might be problems. The main one, even more obvious than when I'd been given command of a battalion after the war, was that I was moving up the armored command chain in uncommonly quick order. And, at age 31,(because of years in Sayeret, not age per se). I was skipping a number of the usual steps along the way.

I held out some optimism (?)from knowing that the ultimate decision would be taken by Motta. I'd seen him only once since his return from Washington. It was outside the *kirya* in Tel Aviv, weeks ~~a couple of days~~ before his appointment as chief of staff was –became clear~~formally announced~~. "Ehud," he said when he saw me, "I'm flying with some people to Sharm tomorrow. Can you come with me?" Obviously in anticipation of the welter of problems he would be inheriting from the war, he had arranged to go see Yossi Yoffe, the paratroop battalion commander trapped under fire at the end of the war in Suez City. Just as obviously, I accepted Motta's invitation to go with him.

He knew Yossi well. Motta had been in overall command during the battalion's brutal battle to capture Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem in 1967. He'd heard about Suez City, where dozens of Yossi's friends, and Motta's, had lost their lives. But told me he wanted to know what had *really* happened. We spent nearly a whole day in Sharm el-Sheikh. Motta asked questions, but mostly he listened. On our way back to the helicopter, he asked me what *I* thought of Yossi as a commander. My reply was unhesitating: a *great* commander, I said. One of the best. Motta paused a couple of seconds before continuing. "I agree," he said. "But when I try to get to the bottom line, after all that I've just heard, I wonder whether we need to rethink the idea that the same person can command the same battalion for eight years, through two wars." Why, I pressed. He said the danger for a commander was that he'd become more committed to his own people than to the *mission* in battle. I was not sure I agreed, and I said so. But the more Motta explained, the more I understood his real impulse in the wake of the war: to look at every area in which the army might benefit from new faces, new blood, new ideas.

While the final decision on Dan's successor in Brigade 401 lay with Motta, he obviously had to listen to

his senior officers, especially as a new chief of staff. One of them was inevitably Kuti, not just because he was now the divisional commander for 401 but because, as Motta's former deputy in the north, he was a trusted friend of valued proven judgment. I was pretty confident, rightly as it turned out, that he would tell Motta to appoint me to lead the brigade.

The head of the southern command, however, was now Bren. The overall head of armored corps was Moussa Peled. I don't think either of them had anything against me personally. But they were tank officers through and through. They had never been entirely comfortable even with Dan, as a former paratrooper. They also felt that it was simply too soon to give me command of a regular brigade. Yes, I had led a battalion in the war, and led it well. Bren, in particular, knew that. But my last *active* armor role – for a few months, before taking command of Sayeret Matkal – had been as commander of a mere company of tanks, in the War of Attrition. I had not even led a true *reserve* battalion before my first post-war promotion. Now, a few months later, I was to be given the 401– instead of a "true" tank officers who had worked their ~~his~~ way up in the usual way. And they had several of them waiting as well.

The first time I heard formally that I was being considered for the post – and learned of the misgivings – was when I was about to return to my battalion from Ramat Hasharon one Sunday morning. As I was leaving the apartment, I got a call from Motta's office. His secretary told me to report to the chief of staff's office in Tel Aviv. Motta smiled (?)when I knocked and entered. Then, he gestured toward the small table at the side of the office, where I saw that he already had two other visitors: Bren, and Moussa Peled. It was a bit of an (?)ambush. Still, one of the things I most liked and admired(Ned, never admired anyone) in Motta was his utter, in-your-face, directness. I sensed that he liked that quality in me as well, though I couldn't be sure. He was not one to bring such feelings, positive or negative, into the open.

"You probably know that(shorter, drier) you're a candidate for taking over 401~~one of our regular~~ brigade~~s~~," Motta said as he led me into the mini-inquisition. "These two gentlemen~~ are armored commanders~~, think ~~and they say~~ that you're not yet ripe~~eady~~ for it. What do you say?"

Maybe if I'd had more time to think things over, I would have answered differently. I certainly would not have chosen this kind of job interview. But my instincts

kicked in. (Just as with my father over leaving the regional high school, or with Dado over the official version of our downing of the Libyan jet, this was an issue on which I felt I was right to fight my corner. So I did.) I spoke with a confidence [EB.(Ned, I assume a reader remembers, isn't it the case?not just from my upbringing and experiences in Mishmar Hasharon). More relevantly, (it came from the armored training courses which I'd taken since right after leaving Hebrew University. I had insisted on beginning with everything an individual tank operator had to know. Then I had proceeded to study, level by level – crew, platoon, company, battalion – the requirements for effective armored command. Now,EB. Till here]) I also had first-hand experience, and not just in the War of Attrition, but, weeks earlier, against the Saggers, tanks, infantry and SAMs of the Egyptian army.

"I don't know exactly what the two gentlemen~~y~~ **mean by whether I'm 'r**ipe~~eady~~**'," I said. "(But I can guess. So) I have a proposal for you. Find an officer, whom (all of) you trust, with an understanding of what battlefield combat requires,(what the role of commander requires. Pick an officer you really trust.**[EB. The shorter it is, the more powerful it ends.}) **And have him check: who among**

the three of us, me or these two gentlemen, is more familiar with the the tank and its systems; Who of us , me or the two gentlemen, better know the battlefields and the ground, Syria or Egypt, by day or night, where our battles had been or will be decided?; Who of us know better the Armor doctrine ,for crew level or company/ battalion level?. Not the Armor doctrine ***I*** think we should have had, but the one ***they*** have wrote and signed on? And finally, asked him to check who of us , me or the two gentlemen, spent more time in a tank turret at the battlefield, shooting at enemy, and being shot by enemy? ~~knows all of the terrain on which Israeli tanks have to fight, in the Golan or in the Sinai or beyond the canal? Who knows the battlefield? Both by day and by night. The names of the villages. How it feels, at ground level.”~~

~~Since no one interrupted, I went on. “And ask this person to check who of us is more familiar with the details of the tank itself: the systems, the standard operational procedures for a tank crew, or a battalion. Or how the main gun of a tank actually works, how to calibrate it. How the transmission system works. How to operate it. And who is more familiar with our armored doctrine... Not what the doctrine *should* be, necessarily,” I couldn’t help adding. “Not based on what I have come to~~

~~understand from the battlefield. But the formal rules and the approach which is taught – which these gentlemen approved and signed off on – and which I learned."~~

Total silence fell in the room. When I'd finished, I thought I ~~could~~ see the hint of a smile on Motta's face. But as all four of us proceeded to bring the meeting to a close politely enough, I had no idea what, if anything, had been/ will be decided. It was several days before I was notified of the verdict. I was told I was indeed will/would become commander of the 401st Armored Brigade in the Sinai.

[~~I was being~~EB. The real promotion would occur almost two months later as well as getting the 401 baton.EB.

I would also be promoted to full colonel – obviously a source of satisfaction, but the less important part of the decision. ~~I was indeed being made commander of the 401st Armored Brigade in the Sinai.~~

Our operational base was in Tassa, around 12 miles back from the canal. It was huge expanse of sand, ringed by metal fencing. It was where Arik had his (?)headquarters during the war. Also, as I soon discovered during a tour of my sector,some 6 miles west of Tassa, not far from where the Libyan passenger jet had been shot down a year earlier. We regularly (?)ran across

bones, even a human skull, a few hundred yards from the base. The surrounding desert was a mix of small, moonlike depressions and sweeping dunes. One of my battalions was deployed a few miles to the south, one a few miles north, and a third behind us. Most of our tanks were American Pattons, the M-48s which I'd had during the war, along with (I did not?)newer M-60s.

We spent three months at a time in this forward deployment, then three months in our rear base, 50 miles east of the canal, near Bir Gavgafa. I worked hard, at times almost obsessively, to apply the lessons of the war. In our training, our field exercises, our tactics and planning, I was always on the lookout for ways of embedding agility, initiative, and an offensive edge, in everything we did. I realized the basics still mattered. Tanks were machines, made up of dozens of other littler machines, from the transmission to the firing mechanism. If you didn't know how to handle them, care for them and operate them effectively, they would grind to a halt. Or veer off course. Or miss their targets. Or explode. But I do admit to being somewhat less than reverent when discussing the battlefield value of our (?)"standard operating procedures". In my defense, I made a more serious, underlying point about the SOPs to my senior

officers. It was that every tank crew member, when facing live fire, will be nervous. Fearful. To the extent we encouraged the belief that SOPs would resolve (?)any situation they confronted, discovering in a real battle that this wasn't true risked doubly undermining their confidence.

My main focus was on other ways of improving our readiness and capabilities. As I'd done with my training battalion level, I began by reinforcing Dan's edict(?) about the Saggers. None of our tanks would remain in a static firing position for more than 20 seconds. ~~I also changed our battlefield formations at platoon and company level: ensuring that a maximum of two tanks moved side by side. In case one of the others was hit, the third tank would follow 20 to 30 yards behind.~~

Most of all, I looked for ways of taking Saggers(? Sounds too much one-track minded about Saagers. They were very important, but, there were so many other challenges) out of the equation completely. We didn't have a TOW unit. But many of our exercises at Bir Gavgafa involved taking tanks through terrain assumed to be impassable for armor. Up steep sand dunes. Through mazes of narrow wadis. And whenever and wherever possible, we exercised at night. (The Saggers required line-of-sight. They had to

be aimed, and locked on to a target. If denied the ability to see our tanks moving, the Egyptians would not only have lost the advantage of their anti-tank missiles. We could attack from them from the side, or from behind.)

During one of our forward deployments, Motta came on an inspection visit. He watched a (small battalion exercise we'd scheduled, emphasizing the ability of our tanks to climb and) brigade level maneuver of 'Mobile defense' on apc instead of tanks. ~~maneuver through a steep ridge of dunes.~~ When it was over, we spoke for over an hour. He wanted to discuss ~~know~~ how, precisely, we planned defend the area east of the canal in the event of a repeat of the 1973 war. I told him the aim of everything we were doing was to ensure *flexibility*. Obviously, the ideal was to move forward, halt an advance, and defeat the attackers. But what mattered was that we *win*, even if that meant using a combination of feints, tactical or operational ~~strategic~~ retreats, flanking maneuvers and ultimately an attack, almost surely at night, in circumstances favoring us and weakening them.

On all of that, I felt (I'm pretty sure(?) we were on the same page. Motta's roots, after all, were also in the paratroop brigade. But I had been thinking about some of the broader issues we needed to deal with. (It would be

another decade, after fighting in another major war), when I read the military historian Barbara Tuchman's powerful book, *The March of Folly*: *From Troy to Vietnam*. But her definition of "folly" was not that different from how I saw some of the key lessons from the war. Essentially, she said that truly foolhardy policies were not something you could identify only after the event. They had to involve a major error in perception, broadly accepted and supported at the time, where significant players, of relevance to the issues, warned, once aand again beforehand, against making the mistakes. and the mistakes, were also avoidable. "No matter how good our tactics or plans," I now said to Motta, "what worries me is that we're *still* not looking at our overall approach to defense against Egypt. It's as if we've forgotten, since 1967, that when we captured Sinai, it was to have a *buffer zone*. We had 150 miles of sand between the canal and the Negev. But when the Egyptians attacked, we defended this desert as if it was the walls of Jerusalem!" He smiled. Motta loved this kind brainstorming, batting around ideas. But I knew it would take a lot more than a few comments from a recently – some would say, prematurely – promoted brigade commander to produce a fundamental rewriting of Israel's strategic doctrine.

That, in my position, didn't immediately matter. Because we were deployed near the canal, and also because I was fortunate enough to follow a similarly (?) iconoclastic commander in Dan, we were given fairly broad freedom to deploy and move the brigade as we felt best. There was a gratifying receptiveness for my approach from pretty much everyone within the brigade. Again, that was in part due to the fact that Dan had instilled a sense of self-confidence and initiative as part of the 401's identity. But it went further. My deputy, Emanuel Sackaelr, had been Dan's as well. He had been in the armored corps from the moment he'd joined the army. It was only natural for him to have expected that he – rather than another "outsider" – would succeed Dan when he'd left. Yet whatever uneasiness this could have created was short-lived. We worked as an enormously effective team.

My year-and-a-half in the Sinai was not without moments of crisis. I suspect that's true of any commander of more than 1,200 troops, in any front-line brigade. But this event was especially tough, because it claimed the life of one of our men. It was during a live-fire exercise in the dunes around Tassa. Officers from the general staff, as well as members of the Knesset's

defense and foreign affairs committee, had come down to watch. As with all our exercises, I placed an emphasis on simulating as best we could the conditions we would face in the event of war. Live fire was one aspect – though the fire, obviously, was on *our* side. But beyond this, at certain junctures, I would in effect declare a particular company or battalion commander wounded, or even dead. It was an occurrence which, as we had learned to our cost in the war, was not the stuff of mere fantasy. In this case, halfway through proceedings, I declared *myself* dead. Emanuel took over. As I'd hoped, not only he, but the officers below him, picked up any slack seamlessly. But when our planned air cover arrived, disaster struck. One of our air force pilots dropped a bomb on one of our own APCs.

I rushed forward from the observation area toward the stricken vehicle. Several of the men seemed not too seriously injured, but one was in grave condition. He was bleeding from his ~~neck and~~ chest and belly. Another officer tore off his uniform sleeve and I tried to wrap him with a band, when the med. Team arrived we had to take him out to their stretcher.(used it, as best I could, as a tourniquet. I checked to make sure the man's tongue wasn't trapped, that he was breathing. I kept his

head raised, in hopes of keeping him alive until) (doctors came 2 min after methe medical helicopter arrived. But within a minute or so, he was dead. Moshe vaHetzy, future chief of staff and the Knesset committee were watching us closely. The soldier died later.

Inevitably, and of course rightly, Kuti ordered an independent investigation into how the tragedy had happened, going into everyone's role in organizing and running the exercise. I was relieved when it concluded that none of those arrangements was at fault. A mistake of judgment in the air. What had happened was something that, later in my military career, I would realize was far, far too common in the Israel army: a terrible, avoidable, training accident.

* * *

Since the 401st was one of two regular brigades on the Egyptian front, it was not always easy for me to make the four-hour drive home to Ramat Hasharon for weekends. At least occasionally, Nava was able to join me in the south, however. There was also a string of other visitors: politicians and journalists. Even poets and novelists. They were all keen to answer, for themselves,

questions about what had gone so wrong before, and immediately after, the Egyptian attack across the canal. One visit, I remember especially well. Two of the country's most celebrated writers – Yizhar Smilanksy, who went by the pen-name S. Yizhar, and the poet Chaim Guri – arrived one Friday afternoon. They ended up spending the entire weekend. (?)On Saturday evening, as sunset began to paint the sand around us a vivid orange, I took them on a long drive through the dunes, in the direction of the canal, and then, in a sweeping arc, back to Tassa.

Yizhar was famous – infamous, to some Israelis on the political right – for a sparely written, powerful novella published after the War of Independence. It was called *Khirbet Khizeh*, and described how a group of young soldiers had expelled Arab villagers from their homes. Guri had been a Palmach officer in 1948. He'd actually gone to the same agricultural high school, in the Galilee, as Rabin. So both my visitors were cut from Mapai cloth. But they were deep, and free, thinkers. They were keenly interested in my accounts of the battles for Chinese Farm, and Suez City, and of the price we paid in finally repelling the Egyptians. Yet I'm sure I was the one who gained most from our hours of conversation, as they sought to place the war into the broader sweep of

where Israel had come from, and where it was going. There was no hard-and-fast conclusion to our discussion. But what I took away from it was a sense that any overall understanding of the security needs of Israel had to take account not just of armies and weaponry,(did I really need them for this observation?. I think the essence was to notice ***their*** wiews as stemming from deep moral, not just interests-led perspectives and the intuitive direct way by which the deal with history and the Zionist narrative) but of the issues of politics, and diplomacy, as well. Intellectually, I knew this. But their visit made me more aware of how my role, my job, my *life* as a soldier had tended to narrow my focus, and militate against my thinking critically about these wider questions.

A more immediate challenge was combining my life as a brigade commander with family. When I got word that Nava was going into labor with our second child, I was on a Jeep, running an exercise five or six miles from Tassa. It was a Wednesday, October 23, exactly a year after the cease-fire with the Egyptians. As Nava was on her way to Tel Hashomer hospital, I grabbed my car, a big American sedan, and my driver, a reserve soldier, and headed north. Unlike Mikhal’s birth, this one was not easy. When

the baby emerged, she was struggling to breathe. Her face was nearly blue. The immediate danger passed, but she was placed in a special incubator. When we got to the hospital and raced up to the front desk, there was a slightly maddening, if comic, delay as the man on duty looked at both of us. We were both in fatigues. He crisply saluted my driver, who was not ~~only~~ taller than me but looked a good deal older, and representative. said: “Who’s the other guy with you?”

Still, a minute later, we were upstairs. Nava was asleep, so I was taken to see our tiny daughter, Yael. As soon as the nurse had left, I noticed that the baby’s pinkie was trapped in the plastic cover of the incubator. I started banging on the window of the room. The nurse rushed back in. With a look of sympathy, mixed with world-weary experience of other fathers in similar panic, she calmly raised the cover, folded Yael’s tiny hands onto her stomach, and all was well.

It was a more persistent, and apparently serious, health crisis that led(?) to the end of my period as brigade commander. But this time, I was the one in the hospital, for the first time in my life.We were at a weekend in Arad overlooking the Judea Desert, when I had begun experiencing running a high fever, bouts of intense

fatigue, ~~running a high fever,~~ hallucinating. I felt almost unable to move. I was taken to hospital. Spent ten days of terrible experience in extremely high fever. The initial suspicion was some kind of contamination, linked to the rudimentary standard of sanitation in our encampments in the Sinai. After I'd been in the hospital for 10 days, the doctors concluded I probably had hepatitis B. Years later, with better diagnostic tools available, we actually ruled out that disease. I've never discovered what the illness was. But whatever it was, the effects persisted when I had got out of the hospital. The fever and hallucinations did go away. But for months afterward, I continued to feel exhausted. Getting through each day, sometimes even a single task, became a physical battle.

The last thing I wanted to do was leave. But just as I was feeling at my weakest, there was yet another belated casualty from the (?)Yom Kippur War. This time, in involved my former sayeret comrade, Uzi Yairi. Uzi's wife would later issue an impassioned rebuttal of suggestions that he, like Yori Cohen, had been so shaken by the war that he had decided to take his own life. I am sure she is right about that. But on the several occasions I'd seen Uzi since the war, there was no doubt he was a

changed man. He did – unjustifiably – seem to blame himself for the debacle into which Yitzhak Mordecai and Battalion 890 were hurled at the Chinese Farm.

It was because theirs/? sensed this too that he had been reassigned to the *kirya*, as an operational assistant within military intelligence. It was an important position. He was one of two officers, one in intelligence and the other in the operations department, who co-ordinated all relevant information and assessments before any operation was launched. But for a former commander of the(?) paratroop brigade, it was, if not a demotion, at least a temporary retreat. I do absolutely(?) believe that one reason Uzi lost his life was from an urge to recover some of the sense of engagement, purpose, and self-confidence he'd had before the 1973 war.

He was at his desk when a Fatah terror team landed a pair of dinghies on Tel Aviv's beachfront, barely a mile away, a little before midnight on March 4, 1975. They had set off from near the south Lebanese port of Tyre. As they pulled the boats onto the sand, they were spotted by a police patrol, which opened fire. The hail of bullets failed to hit any of the Palestinians. But they detonated some of the munitions the terrorists had with them. One of the boats exploded. The Fatah men raced up the sand

onto the coastal road, firing Kalashnikovs and tossing hand grenades. Then, one block in from the sea, they rushed into the first building they saw with any sign of lights, or life. It was a modest, three-story hostelry, the old Savoy Hotel. They shot and killed three people in the lobby. Then, they took the rest of the staff and guests hostage, demanding the release of 20 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Negotiations continued through the night, but there was never any chance Rabin's government was going meet their demands. The popular mood towards Yasir Arafat and the PLO was increasingly angry. There was still a national feeling of anguish over a similar attack a few months earlier. It was by another PLO faction, the Democratic Front, in a town called Ma'alot, near the northern border. Three DFLP men dressed in Israeli army uniforms seized an elementary school and took more than 100 people hostage. Ultimately, Sayeret Matkal was ordered in. But a lapse in co-ordination, and a few seconds' hesitation, eliminated the element of surprise. By the time the battle inside the school was over, twenty-five (33?)of the hostages, most of them children, were dead.

Now, in the center of Tel Aviv, the sayeret was about to be called into action again. The negotiations had been conducted through one of the hotel guests, who spoke Arabic, so it was known there were eight terrorists, and ten hostages, inside. As the unit went through the final details of the operation, Uzi suddenly arrived. He had his rifle with him. He was in his everyday officer's uniform, unlike the sayeret team, which was weighted down by full special-forces gear.

The case he made to them seemed convincing.(He could go in first, move quickly. He would take out any of the terrorists he saw. More importantly, he could get a take on where they were, and where the hostages were held, and direct the others. Besides), he *was* a former commander of the sayeret. He will just join them as a soldier. So they said yes. Shortly before dawn, the force, led by Amiram, attacked. (~~–~~he led them in). They ~~He and the others~~ managed to kill three of the startled Fatah men within seconds. But as they made their way to a room off the lobby where most of the hostages were believed to be held, another terrorist set off an explosive charge, collapsing most of the top floor and sending masonry crashing down. It was when Uzi (?)led a couple of the other sayeret men into another room, in search of the

remaining hostages, that he was shot, in the head and neck. The others burst in behind him. Within minutes, it was all over. Seven of the terrorists were dead, the eighth captured. Though five of the hostages had been freed, five (?)of them had lost their lives. And Uzi died too – shortly afterwards, on the operating(?) table of Ichilov Hospital. A few hundred yards from his desk at military headquarters.

* * *

I was not only shocked and saddened when I heard the news. I was angry. Uzi's senseless(?) sacrifice seemed to me one more result, however indirect, of the shambolic way in which we'd organized our multiple attacks on the Chinese Farm. That was just one of the reasons, however, for my instinctive resistance(?) when I learned that Motta had chosen *me* to take his place at the *kirya*. Just as I was gaining real field command experience, I couldn't help feeling that, as for Uzi before me, the role of operations assistant was part(?) side-tracking, part a kind of rest-and-recovery cure. Still, the fact was that, physically, I *did* need rest and recovery. Even if fully healthy, I'm not sure I could have prevailed on Motta to

change his mind. In my weakened state, there was never any chance.

(There were some positive arguments for saying yes. I do not believe that, as Motta and others suggested to me, Uzi would have *wanted* me to take the job. We had known each other well. We were one of a mere handful of people to have led Sayeret Matkal). Just as I understood, in my bones, the impulse that had led him to get up and head for the Savoy, (I have no doubt he would have expected me to choose field command over a desk job. Still, on some level, I did feel that filling his post was a way of showing respect, a tribute, to all Uzi was and all he had done. There was another attraction as well. At least I'd be back in Tel Aviv, with my expanding family, at home.)

Skeptical though I was on arrival, the job opened up an entirely new world to me. The *kirya* was not new territory, of course. For an officer of my age and rank, I had spent an enormous amount of time there. Especially when commanding the sayeret, I was part of weekly operational meetings that included the chief of staff and his deputy, even on occasion the defense minister. Since direct control of the sayeret rested with military intelligence, I also knew more than most about its workings as well. Or I thought that I did. What I didn't

appreciate until taking over Uzi's post was how the huge range of information we gathered was collated, evaluated, assessed, and ultimately applied to specific operations. Helping ensure that process worked was my new job.

There were, in fact, two of us. The roles had been created as part of a rethinking of intelligence after the war. The way the hierarchy worked was that, below the chief-of-staff, a pair of two-star generals was in charge of military intelligence and the operations department of the army. Beneath each of them was a pair of one-star generals, day-to-day departmental heads. That part was as before. But beneath them, now, was a pair of full colonels. One worked in the intelligence department, the other in the operations department, to produce a final intelligence and operational assessment for all operations. I had that job on the intelligence side. My opposite number in the operations department was even more critical, in a way, since he was the direct link to the people actually doing the operations. That role was held by my old friend, Shai Tamari.

Military intelligence analysis/ 'production' department had specialized units for Egypt and Syria, of course. Jordan. Iraq, other neighboring states. But also for the major European countries. Superpower relations.

All of them sifted through a mountain of intelligence and other information: ranging from our intercepts to reports from our and Mossad's agents, as well as relevant academic literature. Each area desk dealt not just with military issues, like the size of enemy armies or the weapons and munitions they were acquiring. They were also responsible for assessing political and economic developments. And I, along with Shai, was now responsible for bringing (all this together in an assessment specifically tailored for whatever operations were being planned). From cross-border missions by the sayeret to bombing raids on Palestinian bases in Lebanon, or reconnaissance flights over the Red Sea.

This meant participating in weekly, sometimes daily, meetings with each of our area units. By this stage(? In no stage in my life) in my life, I was not shy about voicing my opinions. Bren and Moussa Peled could certainly (Ned ,do you feel a reader won't recall it? doesn't reminding it again looks arrogant?)attest to that. But for the first six months or so in my new post, I barely uttered a word in the specialists' meetings. I did listen a lot, absorbing not only the wealth of new information but getting to understand the way these analysts worked and thought. Little by little, I absorbed

and integrated their approach into the way I looked at every piece of the intelligence picture.

Twice a week, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Shai and I would meet to put together an assessment for all upcoming operations. Then, we'd join Motta's weekly operations meeting with the general staff the following day. With Shai, of course, I was more like the old(what was the new?) Barak: informed, confident, opinionated, fully engaged on the issues we had to tackle. But the only way I managed that was by keeping my ears, and my mind, open in the dozens of other discussions I'd had beforehand with the specialists. I also had another task in my new post. I had to draft the material for the military section of the annual "threat-assessment" report for the army and the government. Fortunately, the first one of those didn't come around(WE started worhing on it early sept at most) until the end of 1975, after eight (5) months on the job.

I learned from that exercise as well. My overall boss as head of military intelligence, Eli Zeira's successor, was a former Palmachnik,(?) a historian(?) by training, named Shlomo Gazit. He was smart, thoughtful, and unflappable. When I'd written the draft for the annual threat assessment, and the head of our "international

desk" had provided the political material, Shlomo, within the space of a weekend, turned it into 20 pages of coherent prose, which, I should admit was much better that anything we gave him.. Before we sent it to print, he held a meeting of all top military intelligence officers. At the end, he said: "We know we run a real danger, for the country, (not to mention our careers), if we fail to spot the signs of a war. But have any of you asked yourselves something I find myself wondering from time to time? Is there not a similar risk if we miss the signs of an opportunity for *peace*?" He said he realized this wasn't, strictly speaking, a part of our role. But that surely asking that question, too, was part of the wider task of ensuring Israel's security.

His words stuck with me for the rest of my time in public life. They had a particularly strong impact at the time. One of the fringe benefits of my job was that I could read the entirety of the Agranat Report on the war. The final volume had recently been released. But only 42 of its 2,000 pages had been made public. The full report included not just further details on the commission's conclusions and recommendations. There were huge swathes of *in camera*(? I did not see that) testimony by nearly all the senior military and political figures in Israel. For

me, the most shocking discovery was Eli Zeira's dogged resistance, until the final hours before the war, to open up our "special sources" and find out what the Egyptian and Syrian military was actually *saying*. One reason was his concern about revealing the existence of the intercepts. But mainly, it was because of his absolute faith in his guiding assumption that Egypt would not start a major war at this stage. And the full testimony (?)in the report brought home to me a related danger as well. It was something I would later, personally, strive to correct: a tendency to discourage, even snuff out, dissent within our military intelligence organization.

There was a further aspect to the approach of the 1973 war of which I'd not even been aware. Like all Israelis, I *did* know that Golda relied heavily on a "kitchen cabinet" of trusted ministers and advisers. But the Agranat material described in detail how Anwar Sadat had been extending feelers about the prospect of negotiated peace in the years (months) before he attacked. And how Golda, Eli Zeira, Dado and Dayan had responded. It was like reading some exercise in collective reinforcement, rather than real questioning or debate. Each of these three men at the top of our defense establishment had acknowledged,(EB. Cabinet meeting in

March-April 73. Bartov describes it in his ‘Dado” book. I mentioned it in detail in my speech 20years after, to the high command gathering.) in his own way, that we had to assume the Arab countries would not simply go on living with the results of the 1967 war. At some stage, they would try to reverse them. But taking Eli’s lead, they seemed simply to assume a kind of historical inevitability of Israeli triumph.

Part of this was Eli’s iron assumption that Sadat would not attack. But it went deeper. The record of their discussions read almost like a postscript to the words of assurance Eli had delivered to us in the sayeret on the eve of the 1967 war, about the inevitable march to a “new stage” in Zionism. Eli, (Dado and Dayan)[EB. You can’t be sure. Probably Dayan?]–now seemed utterly convinced that – just as in the late 1930s, in 1948, in 1956 and 1967 – our Arab neighbors could be relied upon to make a major political or military error every few years, and that Israel, with superior military prowess and political nous(?), would reap the benefits and emerge stronger. Reading the report, I wondered whether a wider, genuine debate might have shaken loose this complacency. Who could say? But that no such questioning had occurred was deeply disturbing.

Peace now seemed a long way off. But at least the chances of a new war with Egypt or Syria were receding. Months of shuttle diplomacy by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had produced “disengagement” agreements with Sadat and Syria’s Hafez al-Assad. In the north, we ended up pulling back more or less to the area we’d held after the Six-Day War, with a UN buffer force on the eastern part of the Golan. In the south, as it happened, the post-war settlement seemed a first step toward addressing the issue I’d raised with Motta on the dunes around Tassa. Sinai was again being viewed less as sacred ground, the “walls of Jerusalem”, than as a strategic buffer against any future Egyptian attack.(none left us quet or calm, the atmosphere was of a condensed worry about repetition of a surprise. There were two disengagement agreements with Sadat. The first, signed a few months after the war, gave Egypt a small strip on the east of the canal, with agreed arms limitations, and established a further buffer strip with the rest of the Sinai. The second accord, in September 1975, widened the Egyptian band slightly, and the buffer zone considerably. The buffer now included the Gidi and Mitla passes, and Tassa, my former 401 headquarters, as well.

Jordan’s King Hussein, meanwhile, found himself left out in the cold. Territorial negotiations over the West Bank would have been far more difficult politically in Israel than Sinai, or even the Golan – though nowhere near as tough as they would become with our expansion of settlement-building a few years later. Still, in what must have seen to him the bitterest of ironies, since the king had not joined the Yom Kippur attack, the need for “disengagement” did not apply to him. More discouragingly for Jordan, with its majority-Palestinian population, the post-war tide in the Arab world was shifting towards Arafat. An Arab summit recognized the PLO as “sole legitimate representative” of the Palestinians in any future talks.

That was unsettling for us in Israel as well. For while Arafat’s political star was rising, the factions that made up his PLO were, if anything, escalating their terror attacks. The DFLP had seized the school in Ma’alot a half-year after the war. In March 1975, Fatah had seized the Savoy, the attack that had killed Uzi Yairi. Now, on the final Sunday of June 1976, a group from the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine launched an even more audacious operation. They would end up holding dozens of Israelis hostage. By the time it was

over, another Sayeret Matkal commander – to whom I'd become very close personally – would lie dead.

The week-long ordeal became known by the name of the airport where it ended. *Entebbe*. And when it began I, just like Uzi before me, was sitting at my desk in the *kirya*.